



The Voices of *The Waste Land*

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Since the publication of *The Waste Land* in 1922 many attempts have been made to find unifying elements in a poem which seems so chaotic. Theme, myth, literary tradition, music, and modern art techniques have thrown light on its underlying structural unity.¹

The suggestion that the poem owes much of its coherence to the cinema and pictorial art may, however, obscure the boundaries between these arts and poetry. The painter and the film producer stress the visual, non-verbal approach to the surrounding world. The poet, on the other hand, may strive to present an accurate, precise image of the world he perceives through his senses, but his medium is words. His image is not merely a 'picture.' It is a verbal picture, appearing in a context of words that may add shades of meaning the words in the 'picture' did not previously possess. Furthermore, as Wellek and Warren have shown, the image 'is a sensation or a perception, but it also "stands for," refers to something invisible, something "inner"'.² The intellectual and emotional overtones of the image are made clear in Pound's definition: 'An "Image" is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time.'³ Imagist practice, not least T. S. Eliot's own up to and including *The Waste Land*, shows how non-pictorial elements form part of the image.

The tentative title of the poem—'He Do the Police in Different Voices'—indicates the importance the poet attached to the vocal element. Kristian Smidt, in his recent book *The Importance of Recognition*, refers to the 'hubbub of voices in the poem', but goes on to show how 'the owners of the voices can be combined into two major figures, one male, the other female.'⁴ The voices form part of Gertrude Patterson's 'assemblage' or 'collage.' She, too, stresses T. S. Eliot's use of a wide range of voices and the predominance of a particular voice.⁵

The emphasis on voices rather than individual characters is important as in that way the fallacy of seeing the poem as a dramatic monologue is avoided. There are fragments of dramatic monologues in *The Waste Land*, but there are never any prolonged efforts to penetrate into the mind of a particular speaker. We are merely listening to 'voices.' Cleanth Brooks uses the term 'protagonist' throughout his *Waste Land* chapter in *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*, which is rather unfortunate because it assigns an essentially dramatic role to an element which is far too elusive for such a function. The tendency to interpret T. S. Eliot's note on Tiresias as implying that there is a main speaker who can be named, may be misleading because it provides a dramatic or narrative element which is not there.⁶

Critics from F. R. Leavis on have perceived a central, organizing consciousness in *The Waste Land*. Leavis sees the poem as 'an effort to focus an inclusive human consciousness.' This view is echoed in Hugh Kenner's reference to 'the pervading zone of consciousness . . . that of the author. . . .'⁷

The emphasis on a central or 'pervading' consciousness suggests a distinction between a speaker—one who can articulate and express himself coherently—and a group of 'personages' who lack this ability.⁸ A number of fragmentary scenes allow us, however, to listen to the 'personages' as well, although the voice of an omnipresent commentator, the main speaker, is heard too.

The idea of a central consciousness involves an apparent paradox: thus M. L. Rosenthal feels that *The Waste Land* depicts the journey 'of a sensibility over the landscape of its own condition,' which suggests that the voices are allegorical rather than 'real.' This 'sensibility' is, on the other hand, a 'speaking sensibility' that adopts 'several *personae* or dramatic roles. . . .'⁹

This paradox is, however, related to a major unifying element in *The Waste Land*, the existence of a distinct speaker, the same person, throughout the poem. His overall attitude is uniform and consistent. At the same time he clearly exploits the whole range of language and tradition. There are many other voices, but they are subordinated to the main speaking voice.

The emphasis on a speaking voice is important. The poem is dramatic in that we are continually made to listen. We try to catch the speaker's voice. This is one reason why it is so easy to distort the poem by approaching it from the fields of art and music, however obvious the links are. The opening passage of *The Waste Land* sug-

gests a voice rather than a picture, and the music it indubitably contains is the music of the speaking voice, fully aware of its power and range.

Rosenthal sees *The Waste Land* 'as a Christian sermon in disguise. . . .'¹⁰ 'Christian' is perhaps too rigid a term for the religious attitude which the poem reflects, but the sermon, the oratorical note, is the predominant quality of the speaker's voice. Critics use words like 'meditation,' 'vision,' and 'dream' about the poem,¹¹ which serve to bring out its affinity to traditional mystical literature and modes of religious experience. In lines like 'Son of man,/You cannot say, or guess, for you know only/A heap of broken images. . . .' (11.20-2), the prophetic role is adopted. Rhythm, stylistic level, and Old Testament background infuse the words with oratorical fire. The prophet is the mediator between God and man. His nature and manner are contemplative as well as extrovert. He is not confined within his own narrow circle of religious experience, but endeavors to convey his visionary knowledge to ordinary mortals. The paradox discussed above makes sense when seen from this angle. The speaker faces in two directions: towards his own private, mystical experience and towards the audience, the external world. Both worlds are included in the words he speaks. This helps to account for the mixture of realistic and allegorical elements in the poem. The 'pictures' of waste land society also stand for something which is not of this world.

The 'prophet' or 'preacher' is never remote from the speaker's approach. He contributes to the conflict between involvement and detachment, which is so central in the poem. The Tiresias/typist passage in 'The Fire Sermon' illustrates this conflict. On the one hand the episode highlights an ascetic attitude to sexual relationship, which is combined with the rather condescending attitude to the lower classes which Craig resents so much.¹² But Tiresias is also participant. It is part of his fate that he has 'foresuffered all/ Enacted on the same divan or bed. . . .' Furthermore, he is fellow sufferer and fellow sinner. He presents himself as a 'peeping Tom' at the squalid scene between the typist and the clerk in which love is debased and deprived of all beauty. Tiresias, the recorder, is tainted by the atmosphere of depravity. He in a way confesses his own unworthiness by establishing himself as the historian of this aspect of the human condition. In the context of the whole poem the scene is one of a series of situations which the 'preacher' exploits in his indictment of the inhabitants of the Waste Land.

The 'preacher' relies on two basic approaches: the confessional and the condemnatory/rhetorical. The Janus-faced situation of the speaking voice mentioned above corresponds to contrasting relationships between speaker and audience. The introvert mode is accompanied by a wish to confess, to expose one's private world to the public. The extrovert approach is accompanied by the urge to persuade the audience to adopt the speaker's belief or course of action. The confessional and the rhetorical are, however, closely linked. On the one hand, the confession may be rhetorical in function: by showing what a miserable sinner he is, the speaker strengthens the appeal of his exhortation and puts himself forward as a warning example. On the other hand, behind the speaker's urge to persuade his audience, there is his special knowledge, which is not shared by the listeners.

Rhetoric is a rather loaded word. This appears very clearly in a recent article in *TLS* by Donald Davie, to whom rhetoric is suspect because it aims at 'emotional inflammation' rather than 'action.'¹³ It would appear, however, that rhetoric is an important factor in poetic language, that of *The Waste Land* in particular. It is certainly a persistent note in the speaker's voice.

The eloquent preacher's skill in exploiting the resources of tradition, language, and speech is amply demonstrated. The voices of the poem achieve some of the scope and comprehensiveness which T. S. Eliot admired so much in the dialogue of Elizabethan or Jacobean dramatists. Davie rightly reminds us that 'T. S. Eliot insisted time and again that *The Waste Land* was not a directive to the reader to feel thus and thus about the twentieth century.'¹⁴ But the poet appears to have been fully aware of the importance of the rhetorical mode. In his essay on 'Seneca in Elizabethan Translation,' T. S. Eliot hints at the derogatory connotations of rhetoric, but goes on to write: 'Without bombast, we should not have had King *Leir*. The art of dramatic language . . . is as near to oratory as to ordinary speech or to other poetry.'¹⁵ The range suggested here is that of *The Waste Land* as well.

Drama and religion are closely linked in T. S. Eliot's theory and practice. In 'A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry,' 'E' claims that '... the consummation of the drama, the perfect and ideal drama, is to be found in the ceremony of the Mass. . . . drama springs from religious liturgy, and . . . it cannot afford to depart far from religious liturgy.' The need for liturgy is emphasized later in the essay in words that are directly relevant to *The Waste Land*: 'The more

fluid, the more chaotic the religious and ethical beliefs, the more the drama must tend in the direction of liturgy.¹⁶ Liturgy is reflected both in the pattern of voices and in the general structure of the poem. It forms part of the 'myth and ritual' which T. S. Eliot 'already . . . saw as a potential means of ordering and transforming into significance, contemporary experience.'¹⁷

Both the texture and structure of *The Waste Land* suggest a ceremony of a religious kind. The underlying vegetation myth implies a ritual¹⁸ which involves sacrifice and initiation, as well as a prophet-priest who acts as a mediator between the occult and man. The 'scaffolding' of myth which Cleanth Brooks traces in the poem, reinforced by the numerous references to the Bible, St. Augustine, and Buddha, constitutes the framework of ritual within which the main voice 'officiates.' The allegorical journey of the Grail legend and the story of Christ, in which the Waste Land is the basic symbol of the human condition, and the traveller is the one who recognizes the need for salvation, provides the poem with the kind of forward movement which is contained in a religious ceremony. The audience is led from 'station' to 'station' to the final 'benediction',¹⁹ 'Shantih shantih shantih.'

The ritual mirrored in the poem suggests a circular movement, related as it is to the rhythm of the seasonal cycle and its recurrent life-death pattern. In T. S. Eliot's poem there are, as Cleanth Brooks puts it, 'two kinds of life and two kinds of death. Life devoid of meaning is death; sacrifice, even the sacrificial death, may be life-giving, an awakening to life.'²⁰ Sterility, the fear of life, the recurring problem of the inhabitants of the Waste Land—the Lithuanian Lady, Madame Sosostris, the people who live in the 'unreal City,' the women in Part II, the 'nymphs,' the typist and her friend in Part III—is countered by a growing longing for 'rain,' for a new birth. From a ritual point of view the question whether fulfilment or frustration is the dominant experience at the end of the poem, does not require a definite answer as the circular movement excludes progression from beginning to end. Such terms are, in such a context, arbitrary, as is shown in *Four Quartets*.

Ritual depends on the interaction between an audience and an 'officiator.' The audience are alternately active and passive—listeners and participants. In 'A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry,' 'B' stresses the way 'A devout person, in assisting at Mass . . . is participating. . . .'²¹ *Murder in the Cathedral* shows up the development of the Chorus from lookers-on to participants. A similar movement

may be seen in *The Waste Land*. The audience, anonymous, hut including the readers, are at the outset observers, but by the end of the poem they appear to be included in the authorial 'we': 'We who were living are now dying. . . .' (1.329); 'what have we given?' (1. 401); 'We think of the key, each in his prison. . . .' (1. 4.13).

The audience effect is most clearly perceived in the inclusion of voices other than that of the main speaker. Most of the fragmentary scenes have a choric effect. They express emptiness and frustration, hope and despair, inability to communicate, to find meaning and coherence—in human relationship as well as in man's relationship to the supernatural. In 'The Burial of the Dead,' the Lithuanian woman expresses the triviality and sterility of her life as an exile. The hyacinth girl moves from the apparently perfect love scene in the garden to a final experience of frustration and despair: ' . . . I was neither/Living nor dead, and I knew nothing. . . .' (11. 39–40). The 'famous clairvoyante,' Madame Sosostriis, displays her ignorance and triviality. The 'garden' scene at the end of Part I is a mixture of nightmare and sick humor. The corpse does not make sense in a context of small-talk, but indicates the need to break out of the apathy of social routine.

All these scenes peter out; the 'conversational energy' they contain is simply exhausted.²² The chorus effect depends, however, on a note of recognition as well. The hyacinth girl recognizes her plight, and the scene in which she appears ends on a note of humility. There is something humble about the Lithuanian Lady in the foregoing scene too. 'A Game of Chess' contains satirical portraits of the types of society the women represent. They all yearn for reassurance, desperately aware of their loneliness and failure to establish contact. But while the hyacinth girl recognizes her situation, the women in 'A Game of Chess' are really ignorant of their plight. Their questions and small-talk do not lead to any recognition that may bring about spiritual regeneration. In this respect too they display their sterility. Both scenes peter out in the exhaustion of utter hopelessness.

The typist scene and the following close-up of the girl by herself are presented as silent pictures. It is as if the 'actors' have lost their gift of speech altogether. Only one remark is heard: 'Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over' (1. 252), but the previous line makes it clear that the remark is merely a 'half-formed thought.' Complete ennui reigns.

The 'monologues' of the London girls at the end of Part III have a

clear choric effect, similar to that of the scenes at the beginning of Part I. There is an even clearer movement from triviality via yearning to the recognition of futility, accompanied by a strong note of pathos and humility.

In Part IV, 'Death by Water,' the final lines have a touch of the chorus, this time silent listeners: 'O you who turn the wheel and look to windward,/Consider Phlebas. . . .' (ll. 320-1). They are urged to recognize the relevance of the fate of the dead sailor to their situation.

There are no overt scenes in Part V. The silence of Part IV persists. There is, however, as already suggested, indication that the audience is being involved in the ritual constituted by the poem as a whole. This impression is mainly due to the use of personal pronouns like 'I,' 'you,' 'we.' Communication is established between the main speaker and the 'you,' leading to the all-inclusive 'we.' An effect of ritual response is achieved, produced by the alternation of choric scenes and passages in which the main voice speaks. The final passage starts with 'I sat upon the shore/Fishing. . . .' (ll. 423-4). From the 'I' and his concern with his lands we are guided by a choir of voices singing in a number of different tongues to the final benediction, which includes 'I' as well as 'you' and 'we.'

There is a striking absence of real conversation in the 'scenes' which occur in *The Waste Land*. The speakers do not appear to be answered, even when they ask direct questions, as when the lady in 'A Game of Chess' asks: 'What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?' (l. 113). The 'answer' is not in inverted commas, which suggests that it may be considered as imagined. The lady, like Prufrock, conducts imaginary conversations, in which questions are a central feature. Besides, the 'answer' she gets is oracula, seemingly unconnected with the question: 'I think we are in rats' alley/Where the dead men lost their bones' (ll. 115-6). Communication appears to be impossible in *Waste Land* society.

Approached from a liturgical/ritual angle, the poem presents a pattern of communication in which the contrasting voices of main speaker and chorus are the main elements. The gradual transition from main speaker to subsidiary voice in the opening lines of the poem has been considered. Even so there is a clear response effect right from the beginning. Lines 1-7 cannot be attributed to the Lithuanian lady, despite the intimate 'Winter kept us warm. . . .' of line five. The words in lines 8-18 are as easily identified as those of the lady. The next passage, lines 19-42, falls into two well-defined

halves. In the first we listen to the main speaker, in the second to the hyacinth girl. In the remaining two sections of Part I the main speaker's voice and that of the chorus are less clearly separated, but the main speaker is all the time present as commentator. He is clearly also the artist, who finds words for what is to be expressed. In the final section the roles of main speaker and chorus are combined. The first lines are primarily those of the main speaker. In the concluding scene he is the 'I,' but the effect of the scene is, as seen previously, a choric one.

'A Game of Chess' can be approached in a similar manner. The main speaker is heard in separate passages, for example in the opening section, in which the lady's 'boudoir' is described. In the two scenes the main speaker may be perceived in the words of the one who 'answers' the lady, and in the 'refrain' of the pub scene, 'HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME.' Part III opens with a section in which the voice is clearly that of the main speaker. Soon, however, alternating voices are heard, as in the collection of apparently nonsensical words in ll. 203-6, or in the implied scenes in the middle sections, the Smyrna merchant and typist scenes. Again the text reflects both the main speaker and the chorus. The introduction of Tiresias clarifies the pattern of contrasting voices who respond to, rather than communicate with, each other. There is a clear distinction in ll. 257-65 between the main speaker's nostalgic reference to the 'inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold' of Magnus Martyr and the 'clatter and . . . chatter' in the pub nearby. The river songs and the songs of the London girls may be attributed to the chorus, but the final lines, a mixture of St. Augustine and Buddha, are a return to the main speaker.

Although the other voices are heard less distinctly in Parts IV and V, the structure of these parts suggests even more distinctly than that of the earlier parts a pattern of responses. In Part IV the main speaker turns from the dead sailor to the audience. In Part V a series of statements clearly made by the main speaker (ll. 322-30) is followed by a section (ll. 331-357) in which the Waste Land is contrasted with a 'hypothetic reality.' The syntactical arrangement—'If there were water . . . / But there is no water' (ll. 345-357)—suggests alternating voices, chorus and main speaker. The latter is the one who states the grim facts which destroy the illusions of the Wastelanders. Moments of recognition are implied. The whole process is probably meant to take place in the mind of the main speaker.

The two following sections, ll. 359-76, alternate between ques-

tions and statements. The main speaker dominates, but again the syntax brings out the response pattern. The activity displayed by the audience in these sections is replaced by passivity in ll. 377-394, in which the main speaker records his arrival at his goal, the Chapel Perilous of the Grail legend. Does the speaker act on behalf of the audience?

In the section in which the thunder speaks, a response effect is achieved by alternating between Sanskrit—the words of the thunder—and the main speaker's elucidation and confessional commentary, which includes the audience. The final section is a chorus of voices, terminating in the act of benediction.

The final line of the poem derives much of its power from the circumstance that the appeal from speaker to listener is mainly one of sound and rhythm. Lexical meaning is irrelevant, as the ordinary reader is unfamiliar with it. However, words that appear meaningless in ordinary language, may form part of a religious ceremony. The use of Latin in Roman-Catholic liturgy is a case in point. 'Shantih' reminds Headings of the 'Selah' of the Psalms.²³ It may be argued that T. S. Eliot draws on the incantatory resources of language in the 'Shantih'-line. Part of the musical effect of the poem derives from the incantatory rhythm of central passages.

Many of the quotations from foreign languages can be approached from this angle. Oracular lines like the quotation from *The Tempest*, 'Those are pearls that were his eyes,' combine obscurity of meaning and the rhythm of recitation. The statements in ll. 1-7 are linked by means of a series of present participles, which occur at the end of each line (apart from ll. 4 and 7). It is as if the speaker chants his announcements. The transition from the flowing, lofty Old Testament rhythm of ll. 20-24 ('Son of man,/You cannot say or guess etc.') to the more abrupt, even syncopated rhythm of the following lines (25-30) shows the 'incantatory range' of the speaker's voice.

This impression is corroborated in the course of the poem. The speaking voice or voices cover the whole range of tones from the lofty, insistent, involved, to the abrupt, precise, syncopated, from the rhythm of Mass to the rhythm of trivial, everyday occasions. But the varying rhythms are used for liturgical purposes rather than dramatic. The audience both attends and takes part in a ceremony which is concerned with man's relationship to the supernatural. The poem is concerned with man's ignorance of this 'element,' his inability to communicate with it, and the need for such communication. The main voice acts as mediator. He speaks in order to per-

suade the audience to accept the truth that has been revealed to him. From the first line the speaking voice intimates knowledge and insight which provide him with authority and power. He has from the beginning a strong hold on his audience, who are ignorant and helpless. He has ability to express himself succinctly, while they lack the skill of articulating themselves clearly and coherently. Their small-talk and gossip may, as we have seen, move in the direction of insight, but only fitfully, and their 'monologues' tend to be inconclusive. The main speaker, however, commands oratorical skill: 'April is the cruellest month. . . .'; 'What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow/Out of this stony rubbish?'; 'And other withered stumps of time/Were told upon the walls. . . .'; 'Unreal City/Under the brown fog of a winter noon. . . .'; 'The awful daring of a moment's surrender/Which an age of prudence can never retract. . . .' The oratorical tone of voice persists throughout the poem and confirms our impression of a liturgical framework.

This is in keeping with the ritual/mythical basis of *The Waste Land*. The 'priest' occupies a prophet-like position between the occult and the audience. A striking feature in the poem is the element of riddle, what Kenner terms 'sibylline fragments.'²⁴ The 'heap of broken images' is not defined, neither is 'fear in a handful of dust.' 'Those are pearls that were his eyes,' the 'corpse . . . planted . . . in the garden,' the 'rats' alley/Where the dead men lost their bones,' the 'I' as the king's son 'fishing in the dull canal. . . .', the nightmarish chapel in the mountains, all these are recorded as 'facts,' but not explained. The speaker does not appeal to reason and judgment: intellectually, these 'facts' may be absurd or meaningless. They are presented as fragments, belonging to a 'reality' which is inaccessible to the inhabitants of the Waste Land, but of which the main voice is given glimpses. On the other hand, the riddles fit into an allegorical landscape of quest and ordeal. The 'prophet' is for ever journeying through the Waste Land of despair on behalf of the audience. His insight does not detach him from experience, it involves him in it. There is an element of scapegoat²⁵ in the prophet's role, a circumstance one is made aware of in the Tiresias/typist passage: 'And I Tiresias have foresuffered all/Enacted on this same divan or bed;/I who have sat by Thebes below the wall/And walked among the lowest of the dead' (ll. 243-6). The idea of vicarious suffering as a means of restoring the Waste Land to health and vigor is a feature shared by many religions. The garden of suffering, the rocky, dry country, the 'exhausted wells' and

'empty chapel' in Part V constitute the landscape of ordeal through which the speaker has to pass. It is this journey that enables him to find fragments which he can 'shore against his ruins.' It is his discovery of 'iragments' and his recognition of 'ruins' that enable him to pronounce the blessing at the end.

The whole poem may be seen as arising out of the speaker's experience of suffering and despair, related to the moment of illumination resulting from 'What the Thunder Said.' Behind the main speaker's opening words in Part I is the spiritual experience of the final section. Like the old sailor in 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' or the narrator in mediaeval visionary poems, the main voice in *The Waste Land* has had an overwhelming spiritual experience of a mystical kind, the result of a nightmarish vision of the society to which he belongs. His approach is that of the visionary who speaks in riddles and uses images and allegory rather than the language of reason. He speaks as one who has been initiated into the mysteries which he has been allowed to see in his vision. At the same time he, the poet/speaker, is prophetic in Collingwood's sense of the word: 'The artist must prophesy not in the sense that he foretells things to come, but in the sense that he tells his audience, at the risk of their displeasure, the secrets of their own hearts.'²⁶ Again the role of the main voice as spokesman is clear. It expresses the general waste land condition as well as the universal need for redemption.

In the words the main speaker addresses to his audience, he exploits two modes which, as we have seen, are linked in the prophet's approach to his listeners. Both are public in function and character as they aim at persuading the audience to accept the speaker's vision. The rhetorical mode has a strong assertive element. In a line like 'April is the cruellest month,' the speaker asserts his special experience of Chaucer's 'sweet' month, and tries to persuade his audience to accept his view and reject the common one. Similarly, he claims that he can show people 'fear in a handful of dust,' or that 'Dry bones can harm no one.'

The assertive mode, based on previous experience, is combined with the oratorical style throughout the poem. The plain fact of former experience is frequently stressed by using the past tense, while the assertive statement, which expresses the speaker's special viewpoint, may be in the present tense: 'Winter kept us warm. . . .' and 'Summer surprised us. . . .', but 'April is the cruellest month. . . .'

The quest passages in 'What the Thunder Said' alternate between straightforward statements of fact, in the present tense—'here is no water'—and conditional clauses—'If there were water. . . .' A vicious circle of paralysed action is suggested: the seeker is stuck in the desert that stretches from hope—the conditional—to despair—the present, the 'slough of despond,' from which hope is unattainable. The 'thunder' passage is mainly concerned with past experience: 'Ganga was sunken. . . . Then spoke the thunder . . . what have we given? . . . we have existed. . . .' The present is a prison: 'I have heard the key/Turn in the door . . ./We think of the key, each in his prison/. . . each confirms a prison/Only at night-fall. . . .' Habit, routine is suggested rather than the action of a particular moment.

Even the process of restoration to health at the end of the poem is recorded as past experience: 'I sat upon the shore/Fishing. . . ./These fragments I have shored against my ruins. . . .' On the other hand, the basic experience of the poem, most clearly expressed at the beginning of Part V, combines the past with the eternally present 'fact': 'He who was living is now dead/We who were living are now dying. . . .' (ll. 328–9). Maybe it is the recognition of this truth that makes the speaker start his 'sermon' with 'April is the cruellest month.' The paradoxical linking of birth and death reminds us of the climactic experience in 'Journey of the Magi': ' . . . this Birth was/Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.'

The assertive mode is also expressed in a particular type of image which recurs in the poem: 'feeding a little life with dried tubers. . . .'; 'What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow/Out of this stony rubbish?'; 'A heap of broken images'; 'withered *stumps* of time'; 'the lastfingers of leaf/*Clutch* and sink into the wet bank'; the prison image.²⁷ These images may be said to be assertive in that the speaker expresses a particular attitude through them, which he wishes the listener to share. 'Stony rubbish,' 'broken images,' 'withered stumps' suggest the prophet's chastizing tone of voice. They are all persuasive in function. The rhetorical is further emphasized by the use of epithets which are not only 'factual,' that is, related to objective circumstances. Further examples of this practice may be quoted: 'dead land,' 'Dull roots,' 'Unreal City,' 'cold blast,' 'The broken fingernails of dirty hands,' 'frosty silence,' 'stony places,' 'Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth,' 'sterile thunder,' 'arid plain.'

The confessional mode is partly merged with the other voices.

Most of the scenes are in part confessional. The allusions to other poets, for example Spenser or Marvell, provide other disguises for the confessional. After apostrophizing the river in Spenser's words — 'Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song,' the speaker goes on to elaborate the contrast between Elizabethan times and the present age. It is, however, easy to perceive a note of wistful regret in the change of rhythm and mood which the quotation entails. Similarly, by quoting from 'To His Coy Mistress' the speaker revives some of the emotional appeal of Marvell's lines. The alterations made by the speaker are, however, significant. The 'sound of horns and motors' turns Marvell's 'winged chariot' into the sordid instrument of sordid pleasures, typical of the Waste Land of the modern world.

The Tiresias passage may be seen as confessional in T. S. Eliot's impersonal manner. The passage which describes the music and architectural beauty of the City (ll. 257–265) suggests the speaker's own private experience of surroundings in which the trivial appears to dominate. It is only he who perceives the contrast between the 'inexplicable splendour' of the church and the 'clatter and . . . chatter' from the pub nearby, or between the music from the river and the 'pleasant whining of the mandoline.' Towards the end of Part III, the 'I' merges with the mystic of Buddha or Saint Augustine. The meditative and denunciatory modes of the prophet are mixed. As mentioned previously, the confessional, the 'I' of the main speaker, dominates in Part V. The speaker appears to withdraw from his audience. His vicarious ordeal is something he has to go through alone. The moments of recognition and spiritual awareness are highlights in this part of the poem. The garden scene leads to the recognition of the link between life and death; the latter is the unavoidable condition for the former. This scene is followed by the recognition of spiritual drought and death, and the discovery of the empty chapel. The 'thunder' scenes reveal growing spiritual awareness. The final scene on the shore of the canal shows up the speaker, apparently stripped of everything, only left with fragments and madness. On the other hand, madness is a traditional prophetic feature, linked with the Romantic idea of the poet as creator and visionary, as seen in for example 'Kubla Khan.'

The assertive and the confessional may be seen as two major tones of voice exploited by the main speaker. The wide range of vocal tones is part of the poem's rhetorical apparatus. The speaker changes in the course of the poem from the sternly oratorical of the Old Testament prophet to the confessional of the contemplative

mystic, from the witty and macabre, even cynical and shocking, to the gentle and tender, from satire and parody to the factual and pictorial, from the plain and sincere to the ambiguous and paradoxical.

'The Fire Sermon' demonstrates the scope of the speaking voice and the facility with which it moves from tone to tone. The oratorical first lines are followed by an ironical reference to 'nymphs,' a tender-ironical allusion to 'Prothalamion,' a satirical-witty 'catalogue' of refuse, a facetious reference to the 'nymphs . . . /And their friends, the loitering heirs of city directors. . . .' Allusions to the Psalms, Spenser, and Marvell are followed by references to the unpleasant and macabre, in the manner of Metaphysical wit, tending towards the absurd, bizarre, and frivolous. All these changes take place in the course of thirty lines. The same speaker is talking all the time, and at the end of the passage (l. 202) he changes from pop song to serious poetry—in French. The flippant and the highly serious are united in one 'tonal jump.' The passage shows how the audience is exposed to a speaker who commands all the resources of the spoken language and can play on every nuance of tone and feeling.

At the end of the poem, in striking contrast, the speaker appears devoid of vocal glamor and magnitude. He is made to share the exhaustion of the other voices. The words he manages to utter are, however, significant: 'fragments . . . ruins,' trailing off into Sanskrit. The speaker has strength to recognize his destruction and need to 'set his lands in order.' But redemption is as great a mystery as Sanskrit to the inhabitants of the Waste Land. The poem is inconclusive in that it is impossible to determine whether it ends on a note of hope or despair. Does it show that the modern waste land will be restored to life through the rebirth of faith, or is it implied that modern society has lost the capacity for faith? It is well-nigh impossible to decide whether *The Waste Land* points towards the hell of 'The Hollow Men' or the new dispensation of 'Journey of the Magi.' The poem is not limited to one type of response, but releases a set of responses, confined by the framework of a mythical ceremony, in which the speaking voices reflect man's immemorial journey between hope and despair, life and death, the here and now and the beyond.

- 1 See e.g. Conrad Aiken, 'An Anatomy of Melancholy', in T. S. Eliot *The Waste Land: A Selection of Critical Essays: A Casebook* (London, 1968), pp. 93 ff.; Cleanth Brooks, *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* (N.Y., 1965), ch. 7; Helen Gardner, *The Art of T. S. Eliot* (London, 1949), p. 87; Gertrude Patterson, *T. S. Eliot: Poems in the Making* (Manchester, 1971), pp. 134 ff.
- 2 Rent Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (N.Y., 1956), p. 177.
- 3 *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (N.Y., 1968), p. 4.
- 4 Kristian Smidt, *The Importance of Recognition* (Tromsø, 1973), p. 14.
- 5 Gertrude Patterson, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-6.
- 6 Cf. Helen Williams, *T. S. Eliot: The Waste Land* (London, 1968), pp. 29 and 31; Bernard Bergonzi, *T. S. Eliot* (N.Y., 1972), p. 92.
- 7 F. R. Leavis, *New Bearings in English Poetry* (London, 1961), p. 95; Hugh Kenner, 'The Invisible Poet,' in *Casebook*, p. 171.
- 8 Cf. Philip R. Headings, *T. S. Eliot* (New Haven, Conn., 1964), p. 56. See also Kristian Smidt, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15.
- 9 M. L. Rosenthal, *The Modern Poets* (N.Y., 1968), 89-91.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 88.
- 11 Philip R. Headings, *op. cit.*, p. 50; G. S. Fraser, *Vision and Rhetoric* (London, 1959), p. 104.
- 12 David Craig, 'The Defeatism of *The Waste Land*,' *Casebook*, pp. 200-13.
- 13 Donald Davie, 'The Rhetoric of Emotion,' *TLS*, September 29, 1972, p. 1141.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 1142.
- 15 T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (London, 1932), p. 91.
- 16 *Ibid.*, pp. 47 and 49.
- 17 Helen Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 11 (cf. T. S. Eliot's review of Joyce's *Ulysses*, *The Dial*, November 1923).
- 18 Ritual is 'a ceremonious performance or a recreation of a crucial, sanctified action' (Richard Ellmann, *The Identity of Yeats* (London, 1964), p. 170), conducted according to a traditional formula.
- 19 Cf. Cleanth Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 165.
- 20 Cleanth Brooks, *ibid.*, p. 137.
- 21 T. S. Eliot, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
- 22 Gertrude Patterson, *op. cit.*, p. 153.
- 23 Philip R. Headings, *op. cit.*, p. 69.
- 24 Hugh Kenner, *op. cit.*, p. 179.
- 25 Norton Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (N.Y., 1966), pp. 148-9.
- 26 R. G. Collingwood, *The Principles of Art*, extract printed in *A Collection of Critical Essays on 'The Waste Land': Twentieth Century Interpretations* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1968), p. 51.
- 27 *My italics.*